

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system, comprising:
2 a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers; and
3 a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper adapted to provide
4 gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a local
5 gatekeeper servicing said local VoIP network is not available.

1 2. A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance
2 with claim 1, wherein said backup gatekeeper is adapted to maintain local
3 gatekeeper profiles in a database and access said local profiles when a
4 corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable.

1 3. A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance
2 with claim 2, further comprising a proxy server adapted to direct call signaling to
3 said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup
4 gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not.

1 4. A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance
2 with claim 2, further comprising one or more routers, said one or more routers
3 adapted to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers
4 are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not. .

1 5. A Voice over IP (VoIP) telecommunications system in accordance
2 with claim 2, wherein said backup gatekeeper is provided by a Network Services
3 Provider.

1 6. A telecommunications gatekeeper, comprising:
2 a control unit; and
3 a plurality of local gatekeeper modules corresponding to local gatekeepers
4 associated with said telecommunications gatekeeper, wherein said control unit is

5 adapted to select for operation individual ones of said local gatekeeper modules
6 when corresponding ones of said local gatekeepers are unavailable.

1 7. A telecommunications system, comprising:
2 a plurality of voice over packet networks, each of said voice over packet
3 networks having an associated local gatekeeper; and
4 a backup gatekeeper having a plurality of local gatekeeper modules
5 corresponding to local gatekeepers and adapted to select for operation individual
6 ones of said local gatekeeper modules when corresponding ones of said local
7 gatekeepers are unavailable.

1 8. A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, further
2 comprising a proxy server adapted to route gatekeeper signaling to and from said
3 backup gatekeeper if a local gatekeeper is not available.

1 9. A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, further
2 comprising a router adapted to route gatekeeper signaling to and from said
3 backup gatekeeper if a local gatekeeper is not available.

1 10. A telecommunications system in accordance with claim 7, wherein
2 said backup gatekeeper is programmed to provide said local gatekeeper modules
3 for service as a subscription service, said backup gatekeeper provided at a
4 location of a service provider.

1 11. A method, comprising:
2 monitoring whether a plurality of local gatekeepers are available; and
3 providing backup gatekeeper services from a backup gatekeeper if any of
4 said local gatekeepers are determined to not be available.

1 12. A method in accordance with claim 11, said monitoring comprising
2 a router determining if a local gatekeeper is unavailable and routing gatekeeper
3 signaling to said backup gatekeeper in response thereto.

1 13. A method in accordance with claim 11, said monitoring comprising
2 a proxy server determining if a local gatekeeper is unavailable and routing
3 gatekeeper signaling to said backup gatekeeper in response thereto.
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1 14. A method, comprising:
2 providing a plurality of local VoIP networks serviced by local gatekeepers;
3 and
4 providing a backup gatekeeper, said backup gatekeeper adapted to
5 provide gatekeeper services to individual ones of said local VoIP networks if a
6 local gatekeeper servicing said local VoIP network is not available.

1 15. A method in accordance with claim 14, wherein said backup
2 gatekeeper is adapted to maintain local gatekeeper profiles in a database and
3 access said local profiles when a corresponding local gatekeeper is unavailable.

1 16. A method in accordance with claim 15, further comprising a proxy
2 server adapted to direct call signaling to said local gatekeepers if said local
3 gatekeepers are available and to said backup gatekeeper if said local
4 gatekeepers are not.

1 17. A method in accordance with claim 15, further comprising one or
2 more routers, said one or more routers adapted to direct call signaling to said
3 local gatekeepers if said local gatekeepers are available and to said backup
4 gatekeeper if said local gatekeepers are not. .

1 18. A method in accordance with claim 15, wherein said backup
2 gatekeeper is provided by an Internet Service Provider.